



VOREC Steering Committee Recommendations and Action Plan February 2018

INTRODUCTION:

The VOREC Steering Committee offers the following recommendations and action plan intended to enhance business opportunities, improve participation in outdoor recreation, strengthen our recreational infrastructure and stewardship of natural resources, and grow Vermont's economy in a manner consistent with Vermont's strong outdoor culture of respect and sustainability. The recommendations are broad, balanced, and inclusive. Through a collaborative process, including considerable public input, we have developed recommendations we think are achievable and impactful, given sufficient public and private commitment and resources. Some key principles have guided our work:

Inclusiveness. Outdoor recreation is defined broadly to be inclusive of all forms of outdoor recreation, including on-road, off-road, non-motorized, motorized, trail-based, open space, and by land, water and air. We have solicited and received feedback from many groups and individuals involved in outdoor recreation. Our motto has been: "If you're outside, you're in."

Balance. We have considered all components of the Governor's executive order including economic growth, marketing, stewardship, and access. We've sought to develop recommendations that balance economic growth with limited resources, balance increased outdoor participation with stewardship and sustainable infrastructure, and balance the varied needs of stakeholders and user groups.

Interconnectedness. We understand there is participation interconnectedness among outdoor recreational enthusiasts with users engaging and appreciating a variety of recreational pursuits. User groups are not necessarily mutually exclusive, i.e.

mountain bikers also hunt; snowmobile riders enjoy cross-country skiing. There is also a strong interconnectedness among the recommendations themselves.

The recommendations are organized in broad categories, and the ideas within each are not presented in priority ranking. We can further categorize and identify recommendations based on which require legislative action or additional funding, how they might impact state revenues, and what timeframe for execution is expected (short, mid, long-term).

Objective	Strategy	Action Steps	Resources Needed	Impact to State Revenues	Timeframe	Status
<p>PRIORITY: Regional Pilot Programs</p>	<p>To show measurable and short-term results, we suggest implementing a distinct pilot program(s) across the state that incorporate several of the recommendations. Elements and criteria of the pilot programs would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic distribution • Community and regional support • Demonstrated economic need • Evidence of existing recreation assets and potential for 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine staff and volunteers to support the pilot 2. Create criteria for an RFP (or other process) 3. Consider hosting a summit for interested stakeholders to vet the criteria and process 4. Issue RFP 5. Ranking committee ranks proposals 6. Select community(ies) 7. Hire consultants as needed to support pilot 	<p>\$100,000 to start</p>		<p>Summer/Fall 2018</p>	<p>Underway</p>

	<p>enhancement and growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High potential measurable return on investment 	<p>8. Work with community(ies) to create successful outcomes and replicable products for future program</p>				
<p>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Support the Outdoor Recreation Business Sector in Vermont</p>	<p>PRIORITY: Create an Outdoor Business Alliance</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research similar organizations in Vermont and in other states 2. Determine potential founding members 3. Invite to meeting to understand purposes (see recommendations for full list) 4. Create bylaws 5. Create non-profit status 	<p>Volunteer time Potentially startup funding</p>		<p>Short-term</p>	<p>Underway</p>

	PRIORITY: Designate outdoor recreation business as a key industry within Vermont's economic development strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with ACCD to add or modify this in the current CEDS 2. Identify funding sources that can tie to this designation 	Staff time	Short-term		Underway (Wendy)
	PRIORITY: Support the inclusion of outdoor recreation business development in Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) lending programs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect with VEDA board about how this could happen 2. Promote resources to potential businesses thru OBA 	Chair's time Legislation?			
	PRIORITY: Revise Act 250 review process for public trails on private lands to make it easier to develop trails and to adequately address environmental impacts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with Governor's office and legislative council to identify options 2. Pursue best course of action with the legislature 	Staff time	Short-term		Underway

	<p>PRIORITY: Create an interactive map and database of the outdoor recreation industry and all outdoor recreation assets</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Form a committee 2. Examine other relevant data sources 3. Find resources to update and revise outdoor recreation assets in Vermont 4. Add this data to map services including the ANR Atlas and other State of Vermont map services 5. Create a list/database of all outdoor recreation industry assets 	<p>Funding and staff time (some secured)</p>		<p>Short to mid-term</p>	
	<p>PRIORITY: Implement a camping gear loan program in Vermont State Parks which</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pilot the program in five Vermont State Parks in summer 2018 				

	<p>provides all needed gear for new campers to foster greater participation among underserved populations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Determine process for getting gear to families 3. Expand to more parks in future years 				
<p>PRIORITY:</p> <p>FUNDING: Create or Enhance Funds for Outdoor Recreation Stewardship Initiatives (voluntary and create a funding plan)</p>	<p>Continue support for Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to promote land conservation and public recreational access, recreation planning, economic development, and affordable workforce housing.</p>					
	<p>Create a mechanism for voluntary contributions to stewardship. For example, at check out, retailers could voluntarily collect</p>					

	<p>1% of outdoor recreation equipment sales of \$1K or more to allocate to stewardship, including Lake Champlain clean-up efforts, and support other efforts to dedicate statewide funding to Vermont's clean water initiatives. Partner with <u>1% For The Planet</u>, a Vermont-based non-profit, to market and implement the program.</p>					
	<p>Create and sell VOREC or Outdoor Recreation merchandise (stickers, decals,</p>					

	<p>hats, water bottles, etc.) and allocate 100% of profits for stewardship including Lake Champlain clean-up efforts.</p>					
	<p>PRIORITY: Strengthen Landowner Liability protections</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Republish the Landowner liability pamphlet (FPR) 2. Provide thorough outreach to new and existing landowners <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify a system for finding new landowners and contacting them with a “welcome basket” 	<p>Staff and volunteer time</p>	<p>Short- and long-term</p>		<p>Underway (pamphlet)</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><ul style="list-style-type: none">b. Identify key landowners for outreach3. Include municipally owned land in protection:<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Identify legislative path for modifying the landowner liability statute (Vermont Statutes at 12 V.S.A. §5791, et seq)4. Ensure that any incentives (tax relief or others) does not impact liability protection<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Same as above				
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	<p>PRIORITY: Enhance the existing <u>Vermont Recreation Trail (grant) Program (RTP)</u> funds and streamline the grant process.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to implement process improvements to the RTP program 2. Seek ways to advocate for more funding for this program 				
	<p>PRIORITY: Create a Vermont Outdoor Ethic which captures the stewardship principles necessary for world-class outdoor recreation assets.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. VTFPR staff explore existing ethics 2. Explore mechanism to ratify ethic 3. VTGC/OBA/VOICe takes on this work 	<p>Staff and volunteer time</p> <p>Additional funding</p>		<p>Long-term</p>	
	<p>PRIORITY: Increase stewardship volunteer opportunities for youth: allow stewardship activities to be</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask schools/land trusts who could let us know about this requirement 	<p>Staff/volunteers</p> <p>Start-up funding</p> <p>Funding for prizes</p> <p>?OBA initiative?</p>		<p>Mid-term</p>	

	<p>counted as part of any volunteer requirement for high school students.</p>					
	<p>PRIORITY: Consider implementing a mechanism through motor vehicle registrations (with an opt-out opportunity) to fund and allow Vermonters free day use at Vermont State Parks.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make the request in next budget 				
<p>PRIORITY: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Support a Pathway for Outdoor Recreation</p>	<p>Create outdoor recreation programs at regional and high school technical centers and at technical colleges as</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore existing programs at high school tech centers to find the right fit to pilot a program 2. Same for technical colleges 				

Careers and Entrepreneurship	feeders to university programs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Explore recreation programs/other related degree programs at universities 4. Set up a meeting with potential partners 5. Create curriculum/unit 6. Implement a pilot program at a connected high school and technical college 				
	Offer incentives and support for start-ups, i.e. starter kits, loans, tech incubator space, insurance, etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey businesses to determine appropriate support incentives for start-ups (OBA?) 2. Based on results, determine process for implementing incentives 				

	Provide internships and mentorships for students and young professionals interested in outdoor recreation careers through the Outdoor Business Alliance.	1. Work with OBA to set up internships and mentorships			
	Connect seasonal positions to create year-round career pathway in OR and related fields	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore similar initiatives (Farm to Plate network) 2. Connect related employers 			
	PRIORITY: Undertake comprehensive review of ATV policy	1. Revise the statute that governs ATV connector trails on ANR lands to clarify the authority of the Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources.			

	<p>PRIORITY: Create and/or adopt outdoor recreation programming in K-12 and post-secondary schools. Integrate outdoor skills as part of required curricula in schools. Support existing outdoor recreation programming already in place in and outside of schools and ensure equity for all students.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Form sub-committee 2. Explore existing programs 3. Promote and present these programs as examples 4. Explore afterschool program participation 5. Seek a grant opportunity to explore this idea more fully 6. Community Conservation (land trusts) could be great partners 			
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OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective	Strategy	Action/Initiative	Resources Needed	Impact to State Revenues	Timeframe
MARKETING: Enhance and Expand Marketing of Vermont's Outdoor Recreation Assets	Allocate a portion of the rooms and meals tax revenue to Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing for marketing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a strategy for moving ahead 	Legislative action		
	Increase financial support for <u>ThinkVermont</u> economic development marketing efforts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In Governor's budget currently 2. Provide input on marketing development for this sector 3. Promote our Vermont outdoor industry on state platforms such as ThinkVermont.com. 			

	Create accurate and clear public information materials for outdoor recreation users	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide high-quality information and marketing materials such as maps, signage, wayfinding etc.2. Support Trail Finder efforts to improve online mapping capacity for trail managers			
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REGIONAL NETWORKS: Foster Regional Collaboration and Co-Marketing of Recreation Assets	Encourage regional networks of recreation assets and support recreation infrastructure projects that connect communities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support regional efforts through the Outdoor Recreation Friendly Community program 2. 			
	Create/rebrand an “Outdoor Recreation Friendly Community” designation program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide high-quality information and marketing materials such as maps, signage, wayfinding etc. 2. Educate business owners and employees via an ambassador program about the economic benefits of outdoor recreation. 3. Give towns incentives to become outdoor recreation “Friendly Towns” with grant funding to build and market 			

		<p>outdoor recreation opportunities, or to manage the impacts of increased outdoor recreation.</p> <p>4. Provide resources for local and regional recreation planning efforts, such as grants or further support of existing programs like the Town Forest Recreation Planning Program, recognizing that the needs, public sentiment and opportunities are unique to each location and what is appropriate to each piece of land.</p>			
	<p>Create a state position for recreation/economic data collection and dissemination and to provide support for</p>	<p>1. ID state agency/department which could host this position</p>			

	community and regional efforts.				
	Cultivate community support for outdoor recreation through communication and events including a Vermont Town Summit on Outdoor Recreation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Host a Vermont Town Summit on Outdoor Recreation in Spring 2018 as part of the formation of the Outdoor Recreation community program 2. Rotate this summit around the state every year 			

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PRIVATE/PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS: Strengthen Incentives for Private Landowners to Allow Public Access	Consider mechanisms to encourage landowners to keep lands open to recreation, including incentives for lands enrolled in current use.				

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ACCESS and PARTICIPATION: Increase Appropriate Outdoor Recreation Access Opportunities and Participation	Improve access to public lands and waterways.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore changes to rules governing the types of uses allowed on public lands and state access areas. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Compile a list of all rules b. Examine potential changes and consequences c. Propose a course of action 2. Simplify and streamline approval process for new uses on public lands <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Examine current processes 			

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">b. Make suggestions for changesc. Implement possible changes			
	Support efforts to maintain access to public trails including protecting the last five unprotected miles of the Long Trail.				

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	<p>Support other creative efforts to ensure lifelong participation in outdoor activities including beginning activity programs for all ages and families, e.g. loaner program for gear, community bike or kayak programs, etc.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ID such programs in Vermont and elsewhere 2. Replicate and support these programs 			
	<p>Identify and promote access across all types of outdoor recreation and all seasons – including both</p>				

	more intensive trail-based, as well as dispersed non-trail based; land-based and water-based recreation.				
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	<p>Identify and support equitable access to outdoor recreation for youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, veterans, New Americans, racial and ethnic minorities, women and other special populations. This could include marketing, promotion, access to equipment, programs and other opportunities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer training opportunities to service providers (State park staff, fish and wildlife staff, ski areas etc.) 2. Work with existing and potential groups representing special populations to determine events, opportunities and programs that would best serve their constituents 3. Create marketing materials which depict and speak to a more diverse audience 	<p>Funding to hire training facilitators</p> <p>Staff time</p>		

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STEWARDSHIP: Support Stewardship of Outdoor Recreation Assets and Infrastructure	Ensure high-quality waterways, including funding for Lake Champlain clean-up efforts.				
	Actively encourage all outdoor-minded businesses to participate in <u>VOICe</u> and build a funding coalition in support of Vermont's trail-based nonprofit organizations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer an add-on membership to OBA business members 			

Objective	Strategy	Action/Initiative	Measurable Outcomes
	Include stewardship activities for outdoor recreation in wellness programs in communities, businesses and schools.		
	Strengthen stewardship and management of public lands to provide “open space” recreational opportunities for hunters, backcountry enthusiasts, and others that seek solitude and quiet for their recreational pursuits.		

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	<p>Consider a check-off box on Vermont State Income Tax return.</p>				
	<p>Support a modest increase in general fund for FPR to create capacity to support VOREC initiatives</p>				